



Afghan De-Mining workers employed by Ronco Consulting Corp., stop work when unprotected personnel come within a 50 meter perimeter to the their de-mining activities.

The Army Corps of Engineers working for CSTC-A (Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan), and with the help of Ronco Consulting Corporation, is undertaking the largest de-mining project in Afghanistan Located in the capitol city of Kabul. The future Afghanistan Defense University (ADU) and the Ahmad Shah Massoud monument will be located on this four million square meter site full of cold war and Taliban history.

This specific area has seen over thirty years of fighting and is more or less a shrine to Ahmad Shah Massoud. Massoud, also known as the “Lion of Panjsher”, was a brilliant strategist, known for his resistance against one of the largest armies in the world, the former Soviet Union. The Soviets first seized this land in 1979, which at that time belonged to his family, and trans-

formed it as a military compound and school.

Over their 10-year occupation of Afghanistan, Mas-



Ahmad Shah Masood - Also know as the “Lion of Panjsher” was considered one of the greatest guerilla fighter.

soud fought against Soviet control with any non-terrorist means possible. Repeatedly, the Soviets tried in vain to capture or kill Massoud and to curtail his

resistance to their governmental control. They tried but failed. He always managed to elude their capture and escape with his life. The Russians consistent failure to gain Massoud dominance ultimately caused the downfall of the Soviet Union in 1989. It is attributed that Massoud guerilla actions led to their final demise. Massood's experience and with the devoted support of



Afghan Soldiers guard the location Ahmad Shah Masood slept and planned his military strategies.

his followers enabled him to become the champion of the Cold War.

The Soviets finally withdrew their forces from Afghanistan in 1989, leaving a communist government in place. In 1992, Massoud reclaimed the city of Kabul and overthrew its communist controlled government. He was also able to reclaim his families land, but for only a very short time. 1996's massive offensive against the government and the capitol city of Kabul, the Taliban seized control of the capitol city, but again Massoud manages to escape with his life.

On a mission in April of 2001, Massoud goes to Europe to hold a press conference and try to inform western leaders about the growing power of Al Qaeda in Afghanistan as well as Pakistan's secret assistance to the Taliban and Al Qaeda. Massoud appealed to all nations, "Do not leave the Afghan people alone in their resistance". Massoud, was quoted in saying "if

Afghanistan would lose the fight against terrorism the whole world would lose".

On September 9, 2001, two foreign suicide assassins, who had camouflaged themselves as journalists, murdered Ahmad Shah Massood two days before the attack on the twin towers in New York. It turned out that Massoud had clearly been right. The Afghan Interim Government under president Karzai posthumously awarded him the title of "Hero of the Afghan Nation."

The rich history of this piece of land, and the intricate roll Massoud had in it, is the determining factor why the current Afghan government picked this area to be the future location for the Afghanistan Defense University (ADU) and monument to Ahmad Shah Massoud. There's one major obstacle the Army Corps of Engineers is confronting before building on this land, it is highly contaminated with UXO's (un-exploded



The above picture is an example of some of the ordinance debris scattered by a bombing raid on the Taliban.

ordinance) and land mines.

Ever since the terrorist attack on 9/11 launched the war on terror and hurled the world into the fight, one of the many targeted locations by coalition forces was that of Massouds family land, a then occupied Taliban headquarters. It not only housed the Taliban regime, leaders, and commanders, but it also stored huge amounts of ordinance. The area would receive heavy bombings

by coalition forces to not only to destroy the Taliban but the large amounts of stored ordinance. Unfortunately, the ordinance scattered throughout the area, and along with the existing placed landmines, made it one of the most contaminated areas in Kabul. This fact did not deter the Afghan Government from pursuing the ADU project on this land. The government specifically picked this area because of its historical significance despite the known levels of contamination, and according to the Army Corps of Engineers, any building project being taken on would require the



Sardar Wali - Supervisor for Ronco Consulting Corporation, goes over in detail the amount of ordinance found, area covered and safety precautions being taken at the Afghan Defence University de-mining project.

removal of all UXO's up to one meter in depth or no construction would take place.

Currently the ADU site is in the process of being demined. According to David Stanton, Safety manager for the Army Corps of Engineers "It will be a major Afghan Army training center that's been called The Ft.

Bragg of Afghanistan and due to the large project size, contractors will start work in designated cleared areas in advance of the entire site being cleared". The Army



Afghan deminer searching for surface and subsurface UXO/Landmines.

Corps of Engineers working for CSTC-A (Combined Security Transition Command – Afghanistan) and utilizing the services of Ronco Consulting Corporation, has the tedious task of clearing this site. Ronco is taking every precaution to clean it up safely and completely. "There's a total of ninety de-miners making up nine teams and all but one is Afghan" says Stanton. Chris Yonat, Occupational & Explosive Safety/De-Mining adds, "Ronco clears the land in grid areas using the latest in subsurface detection equipment to a depth of one meter and sometimes even up to four meters, finding approximately 1000 pieces of ordinance every ten days of work, ranging from large artillery projectiles, mortars, grenades, small arms, mines and cluster-munitions". Ronco carefully logs and insures



Danger does not only rest on the landmines found in Afghanistan, UXO (unexploded ordinance) is another threat to be very careful of. Above are examples of UXOs found in less than ten days of de-mining at the ADU sight.

quality control standards every step of the way and so far 800,000 square meters has been cleared of the four million square meters designated for the ADU site, “this is a significant accomplishment considering the depth requirements put upon the contractor” says Stanton. “The scope of work is considered the largest demining effort undertaken in this country and the largest AED has accomplished to this point”. Stanton adds, “It’s compared with the clearance effort at Fort Ord, California”, a former MRA (Multi Range Area). The ADU site is definitely one of the largest demining projects in the country, and since Afghanistan is one of the most heavily mined countries in the world, killing from 118 to an average of 63 per month, a 55% decrease from levels five years ago people, this is a step in the right direction to clear out all UXO/landmines.



Afghanistan is one of the most heavily land-mined countries in the world. These are just a few of the landmines recovered at the Afghanistan Defence University de-mining project.

32 of out of 34 provinces are contaminated and so far The Mine Action Program for Afghanistan (MAPA, set up by the government of Afghanistan) has cleared almost 1.2 billion square meters of land since 1989 with more than 700 million square meters remaining to be cleared. That represents approximately 60 percent of all the contaminated land estimated to exist in

Afghanistan. According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Government of Afghanistan, Afghan mine-action personnel over the past 18 years has enabled Afghanistan to make substantial progress toward a proposed deadline in clearing all emplaced anti-personnel mines



Photo of 23mm Armor Piercing AP with Tracer, collected less than ten days of de-mining at one AED demining site in the capitol city Kabul, Afghanistan.

by 2013. With the help of the Army Corps of Engineers removing UXO/Landmines throughout building sites in Afghanistan, they are also making an impact on the amount of land cleared of dangers.

The new training facility on the horizon to help Afghans defend their country and learn new skills along and with its long history, this will be a university to proud of for years to come. A training ground for future soldiers and scholars to learn how to fight, protect and rebuild their county in order to keep a free Afghanistan, a place to remember a true hero of the Afghan people, Ahmad Shah Massoud. The construction by the Army Corps of Engineers will build a great Afghan University and will also help reduce the serious problem Afghanistan is plagued with, landmines and un-exploded ordinance. 🇦🇫